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02/14/2012 Minutes

Park and Recreation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, February 14, 2012
Approved

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00 PM on the first floor of the Arlington Senior Center on Tuesday, February 14, 2012.

Members in attendance included: Leslie Mayer, Jim Robillard, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff and Don Vitters. Also in attendance was Director of Recreation Joseph Connelly.

Members of the public included: Christine Dreshler, Michelle Durocher, Sue Doctrow, Amy Goldstein, Meghan Henning, Brian Murray, Robin Varghese and Karen Grossman

Approval of Minutes

January 10, 2012 Minutes – Mr. Vitters motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Robillard and approved 4-0-1 with Ms. Canniff abstaining.

Open Forum – Public Comments

Mr. Murray reviewed his request for fields for a spring/summer U-13 AAU baseball team. Mr. Connelly stated that his concern is the precedent this may cause as well as the future addition of teams. Mr. Robillard stated that he was not against the program but wanted to make sure it did not interfere with the current use of the fields. Mr. Murray stated that many of the kids are going out of town to play and his goal is to keep them in Arlington. Ms. Mayer stated that this would have to be an agenda item so that it could be voted on. Ms. Rothenberg asked that the league ages and field uses be broken down so she could better understand the conflicts.

Ms. Mayer asked Mr. Murray to meet with Mr. Robillard and Mr. Connelly before the next Park Commission meeting.

Spy Pond Path Way Discussion

Mr. Connelly and Mr. Vitters reviewed their walk around the path with CRJA and Karen Grossman. Mr. Connelly explained the drainage issues and the price from CRJA to design the corrections for bid. Mr. Vitters stated that he thought there was a simpler fix to the problem and that the scope of CRJA could be reduced. Mr. Vitters also stated that he felt a yearly maintenance plan was key to a successful long range plan.

Ms. Grossman stated that she has had repeated conversations with Heimlich on a remedy and was also investigating different materials. The Commission discussed different potential surfacing materials and the benefits to them. Mr. Connelly stated that he did not like the way the stayloc material has worn in the test area. Ms. Grossman felt that the discoloration may have been because of the time of year it was put down.

The Commission asked Mr. Connelly to sit down with CRJA and try to revise the scope to simplify the renovation.

Discussion about Toys Left at Public Playgrounds

Mr. Connelly reviewed the concerns about toys being left at town playgrounds. Mr. Connelly explained that the concern is not so much for a sand bucket or two but rather the larger items that are being left. Mr. Connelly stated that at Magnolia Playground there were cars, kitchen sets, plastic slides, a see-saw and various other items left all over the playground.

Mr. Connelly stated that there really was not an option to remove these items due to the encroachment on the playground safety zones and other various safety requirements.

The Commission discussed how the message should be conveyed and the best way to word the policy.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that safety had to come first and that the items should be removed. Mr. Connelly stated that common sense would be applied to the policy regarding a few sand toy items.

Ms. Canniff made the following motion, seconded by Mr. Robillard, motion approved 5-0:

To maintain a safe and enjoyable recreational environment for all users, NO toys, sports equipment or other personal items shall be left at any property under Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) jurisdiction, including playgrounds, parks and playing fields. All items brought to any recreational property should be removed upon leaving the property. Any items left unattended on PRC property without prior approval from the Director of Recreation will be removed and disposed of by the Town.

Review of Field Damage Fee Agreement

Mr. Connelly reviewed the draft agreement which places a financial penalty on groups that damage fields if the fields are used when they should not be. Ms. Mayer stated that the policy reflected the conversation the Commission had at their previous meeting.

Mr. Connelly stated that this policy would be reviewed with the field users at the annual meeting. Mr. Connelly hopes that the policy will act as a deterrent on using fields when they are not playable.

Mr. Robillard motioned to approve the policy, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 5-0.

Capital Improvement Project Update

Wellington Tennis Courts – Mr. Connelly stated the project is complete and just awaiting final light testing/training with Musco.

North Union Basketball Court – Bid due at the end of the month.

Thorndike Field OLRA Update – Mr. Connelly stated that the Stanton Foundation has committed to picking up the cost of the change order.

2013 Capital Request Review – No report.

Reservoir Boat Ramp – No report.

Buck Field Renovation – No report

Poets Corner Master Plan – Mr. Connelly stated the intent of the master plan and answered questions from Ms. Deshler

Off Leash Dog Review Review and Draft 2012 Warrant Article for Afternoon Off Leash Hours

Mr. Connelly introduced the warrant article. Ms. Henning, the submitter of the article, reviewed the article as well. Ms. Henning highlighted that the intent was not to jeopardize the success of the current off leash hours or current program plan.

Mr. Varghese stated that the 6 PM time would give flexibility to those who could not make the morning hours. He also stated that the article should be put through as written so that the Park Commissioners would have more flexibility when establishing guidelines.

Mr. Miel stated that the current bylaw was too restrictive and although the new Thorndike Off Leash Area was wonderful it did not give those residents in the heights that do not drive any benefits.

Mr. Larson stated that Robbins was empty from late July through August and thought that any restrictions in hours should take that into consideration.

Mr. Connelly stated his concerns with the afternoon hours. Stating the amount of permitted use in the evenings as well as unpermitted recreational play in the parks.

The Commission discussed how to frame their opinion on the article with regards to increased restrictions.

Ms. Dreshler suggested that the commission choose one or two parks to start this program as a pilot. Ms. Dreshler stated that as a Town Meeting member she would be more inclined to support a program of a pilot nature.

Ms. Goldstein stated that the Article as drafted gives the authority to the Park Commission to do with it as they choose. She stated that the bylaw should be as open as possible to allow the Park Commission the flexibility they need.

Ms. Rothenberg made the following motion, seconded by Mr. Robillard and approved 5-0.

The Park and Recreation Commission reviewed and discussed the proposed Article 24. The Commission feels that it could support this article provided the language in the bylaw allows for additional restrictions and exclusions to be placed on the evening hours proposed. It would be the intent of the Commission to restrict evening off-leash hours in a manner consistent with the principles applied to morning off-leash hours - evaluating each property for its current uses and appropriateness for evening off-leash hours. It is expected that there would be limitations related to seasonal use and specific location exclusions. The exact limitations and restrictions would be implemented by the Commission after an open, transparent, public process. The Commission recognizes that, while evening off-leash hours present certain challenges, it is a need that has been raised repeatedly by members of the community.

Special Requests

Mr. Connelly reviewed the request to use the trails around the reservoir for an out of town road race. The Commission reviewed the request. Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 5-0. Ms. Mayer just asked to remind them of the trash in and trash out policy.

Mr. Connelly updated the Commission on the flooding of North Union spray pool for ice skating. Mr. Connelly explained DPW apprehension to use the hydrants and that the proponents will be making the request earlier next year so the work can begin prior to the ground freezing.

Rink and Recreation Update

Mr. Connelly stated that the Myrec.com new program registration component would be operational by the end of the month.

Committee Updates:

Ms. Rothenberg discussed updating the subcommittees. The Commission discussed this with Mr. Connelly.

Portable Restrooms – N/A
Friends of Parks – N/A
Skateboard Park – N/A
Mill Brook Linear Park – N/A

Other Business

Thompson School Site Plan – The Commission reviewed the plan. The Commission asked Mr. Connelly to request some natural buffering in between the spray pool and the proposed dumpster location.

PARC Grant Process – The Commission discussed the application process and asked Mr. Connelly to investigate. Ms. Rothenberg suggested Poets Corner being a potential grant project applicant.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:
Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation